

The Third Road

and other Songs and Verses

Kathleen Conyngham Greene

A



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The Third Road

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and other Songs and Verses

By

Kathleen Conyngham Greene

London

A. C. Fifield, 13 Clifford's Inn, E.C.

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PLYMOUTH

To
XIX Pens
from
the XXth
1907-1910

“Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.”

I AM indebted to the Editors of *Country Life*,
the *Treasury*, and the *Westminster Gazette* for
permission to reprint verses originally pub-
lished by them. Also to Messrs. Sidgwick and
Jackson for permission to reprint verses from
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The Third Road



The Third Road

OH! will ye tread the upward road
That leads towards the light?
Or will ye tread the downward road
Of wickedness to-night?
Or have ye found that other road
That leads nor up nor down,
But all among the willow stems
And heather red and brown?

There is no sound of song nor dance
Nor bird upon the tree,
But water, water dripping down
And dripping to the sea.
And ever on the standing grass
The misty shadows fall,
Though there is neither sun nor moon
Nor any stars at all.

Oh ! seek ye well the upward road
And walk ye well therein,
And guard against the downward road,
Which is the road of sin ;
But if ye find that other road
Among the willows grey,
Watch lest the people of the road
Should steal your soul away.

Magic

THE stream is silent here :
Only the rushes sigh.
Over us from the sky
A curlew passing by
Calls faint and clear.

This is the gate of things
That we shall never know.
The tune that the winds blow
And the rushes' song below
Are hidden from kings.

A mist comes up the stream,
The sky above is clear.
The first step of the road is here,
The last word of a dream.

The Silver Wood

SAIRIE, do you hear me? I am calling to you,
Sairie,

Down beside the silver wood where silent runs
the stream.

Come and meet me, Sairie, for the farm is still and
sleeping,

And like diamonds through the silver stems the
moon-rays glint and gleam.

“Nay, I cannot meet you in the shelter of the
silver wood,

For whoso seeks the silver wood must leave her
soul therein;

Fearful are the shadows where the silver trees are
thickest,

And I must to my prayers again to keep me safe
from sin.”

Sairie, won’t you come to me? The moon is
dropping westward,

The shadows fade and lengthen now, the day is
coming soon.

Sairie, dear, have pity on me ! Stretch your hand
to save me,
For my soul is slipping, slipping with the fading
of the moon.

“ You can cease your calling, for I hold my door
against you ;
Prayers are round my pillow and an angel at my
head.
Fast I close my lattice lest the sound of rustling
silver leaves
Should slant across my holy dreams and waken
me to dread.”

Sairie, you can sleep your fill ! I cannot tarry
longer !
Coming at the dawn of day you’ll look for me in
vain.
Dreaming you may long for me and rising you may
seek me ;
My path is through the silver wood : I cannot
come again.

The Changeling

OH! weary pipes of Fairyland
That pipe a plaintive tune!
I cannot take a fairy's hand
To dance beneath the moon.

When every fairy dancer sings
And splashes in the dew,
I sit and long for nameless things,
And joys I never knew.

I cannot take a fairy's hand
To dance before the wind;
They stole me here to Fairyland
And left my heart behind.

The Last House

“Those suspected of witchcraft are driven outside the town.”

THIS is the last house,
The houses are all behind :
Here is the bare heath
And the loud voice of the wind.

The neighbours, when they pass,
They cross themselves in haste.
This is the last house,
And beyond is the great waste.

Cold, cold is the heath,
The wind blows over the land :
Cold, cold is the hearth
Where a Christian will not stand.

Why did you drive me forth
—And I was fair to your sight—
Here to the last house
And the cold dread of the night ?

Here where no church bells ring,
Here where no children play,
Where the voices I would not hear
Call to me night and day.

Yours be the sin, yours
Who drove me out and down !
I could have kept my soul
In the four walls of a town.

Here in the last house
Where you drove me forth to sin,
When they call to me round the door,
Here will I let them in.

November

NOW the grey trees droop their lank boughs
again,
Now shine the street lamps dimly through the
haze,
Now pass grey figures, ghost like, in the rain . . .
These are the sorrow waking Holy Days.

All Saints . . . All Souls . . . gone from our
sight ahead,
Watch by the shadowy altars where we pray.
White robes for innocence, for victors, red,
While we below are all enwrapt in grey.

A Prisoner

OH! my neighbour he is lucky in the morning
sun that falls
On his bare and whitened ceiling, on his bare and
whitened walls.
He can mark the passing minutes by the shadows
of the bars,
And at night above the iron sill he sees the rising
stars.

The prisoner counts the sun a friend although it
wakes him soon,
And from month to month he watches for the
coming of the moon ;
When storms come howling round the walls and
drive the creaking vane,
He'll press his face against the bars to feel the
touch of rain.

My neighbour he is lucky, for he looks towards the sun,
Though it calls him from his summer sleep to say the day's begun ;
But through my northern window I can watch a cherry tree,
And my neighbour in his sunny cell, he knows and envies me.

Why Should I Grieve ?

WHY should I grieve because you are not true,
Or why despair ?

The world holds other maids as false as you,
Others as fair.

So go your way : your love is naught to me ;
And cease your weeping.

Perchance when you return my heart may be
In safer keeping.

Frosty Nights

THE winds are all asleep on frosty nights,
The trees are silent and the water dead,
Only the stars, a thousand living lights,
Are burning overhead.

The rising moon, her silver wings unfurled,
Moves up the sky and drives the stars away,
She scores the surface of the dumb white world
With lines and shadows grey.

From Davos

September 1st

RED and gold and yellow are the colours of the
stubble fields,
—Red of lingering poppies, gold and yellow wisps
of corn—
Oh! the wind among the turnip-tops, the sweet
rain-scented furrows,
And the birds against the skyline when the day is
at the morn!

Here within the fortress, with the jailer hills around
me,
—Snowy peaks like lances gleam and glitter in the
sun—
Chains and gyves, unseen but strong, have bound
themselves about me,
To keep me here a captive though the shooting
time's begun.

Red and gold and yellow in a frame of russet
hedges,

—Dipping wings that rise and fall and whir across
my brain—

Scent of earth and sound of shot and sight of
scattering feather!—

Oh! the chains are sore upon me till I walk the
fields again.

An Animal Song

(For Lone Hunter's Stories of the Fur Folk)

THESE are your brothers ; listening you have
heard

Their thin faint voice that speaks without a word,
That speaks from beast to beast since life began,
And oh ! so rarely speaks from beast to man.

For you, I think, with open eyes have trod
The long, long road that leads at last to God :
And over all the centuries between
Look and remember where our lives have been.

And, seeing that we rose, can trust that they
Not unrecorded suffer day by day ;
Can trace the purpose through their endless pain,
And hold their loves and labours not in vain.

These are your beasts. Too low, we say, for sin,
Unsharing in the fight the world must win :
We spurn them, scorn them, slaughter them for
play—

Are we more fit for Heaven than such as they ?

The Parakeet

THERE is a grim old beggar man
Who goes about the dreary town
From house to house, from street to street.

An organ hangs across his back,
Beside it, in a rusty cage,
A green and yellow parakeet.

He is a type of griminess,
Ugly and pitiful and old ;
His organ is the voice of woe.

But all the wonder of the South,
And all the flashing vaunt of life
Live in his chattering parakeet.

The Children in the Tower

WE talked of life, of things beyond the bound :
Like children, prisoned in a tower room
Of warmth and light, where all without is gloom.
We knew the darkness, we could hear the sound
Of storms we did not share, of things profound
And terrible. Black tragedy and doom
Looked through our windows; all around the loom
Of Heaven was weaving upwards from the ground,

While we were set apart. Into the night
Our self-made lamps threw out a ring of light
That hid the purpose of those whirring wheels
And all the mighty web that moves and feels.

To share therein we too should break our bars,
Blow out our lamps and guide us by the stars.

Child Songs

Armies of Dreams

ALL night long I saw them marching,
Tramping, tramping down the street ;
All night long I heard the rattle
Of the stones beneath their feet.

On to Delhi, Balaklava,
Marathon and Waterloo ;
Drums and trumpets played before them,
Bugles sounded, banners flew.

Cæsar, Marlborough and Napoleon
Rode together in the van ;
All the gallant men of battle
Since the battle days began !

I alone could hear them marching,
I alone could see them pass,
Chilly kneeling at the window
With my face against the glass.

The Shepherd

OH ! I would be a shepherd,
And watch the silly sheep !
Oh ! I would be a shepherd
If you were there, Bo Peep !

Together we would climb the hill,
All wet with morning dew,
And while you watched the silly sheep
I'd watch and care for you.

Who would not be a shepherd,
To watch the silly sheep,
And see the rosy morning break
Alone with you, Bo Peep ?

The Angel Mother

MY Mother is an angel bright,
She wears a crown of gold ;
Her dress is pink and silver bright,
Her wings are feathers, soft and white,
And glorious to behold.

All through the day she sits and sings
Above the sun and rain,
And does her lovely heavenly things,
But in the night she spreads her wings
And comes to earth again.

Four holy angels round my bed
Keep watch the long night through,
And one with snowy wings outspread,
Stands close and still behind my head,
Oh ! Mother, is that you ?

To Peter Pan

ALL through the long and shining day
I like to think that I'm a man ;
At night I have another play,
I lie and wait for Peter Pan.

I stay as quiet as a mouse
When all the room is dark and still,
And hear his wings about the house,
His little hands upon the sill.

His voice is calling in the wind
And sometimes, when the moon is high,
I see a shadow on the blind
And know it's Peter flitting by.

The Never Never Never Land
Is just beyond the Fairy dell,
For there I saw the Indian band
And heard the voice of Tinker Bell.

To Peter Pan

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Oh ! Peter ! as in bed I lie
I think and dream and long for you !
Why can't you teach me how to fly
As once the Darling children flew ?

Come quickly, Peter, do not wait !
Come just as quickly as you can !
Or else perhaps 'twill be too late
And I shall really be a man.

Fairy Boats

WHEN the golden moon's a-shining
Above the distant hill,

The fairies go a-sailing
In the pool beyond the mill ;
And all the little silver trout
That lie below the weir
Can see the fairies sailing
When no one else is near.

Oh ! daylight's for the working world
As twilight time's for love,
But moonlight's for the fairies
Since the first moon shone above.

When the crescent moon's a-hanging
Like a bow above the bay,
The fairies launch their walnut shells
And sail till break of day.

And all the little silver stars
That shine about the sky
Can see the fairies sailing
When no one else is by.

Oh ! daylight's for the working world
As twilight time's for love,
But moonlight's for the fairies
Since the first moon shone above.

Fairy Dancers

THE others were asleep in bed,
The blinds were drawn, the fire dead,
When patter, patter overhead
I heard the fairies' feet.

I heard them scamper to and fro,
I heard them dance, now quick, now slow,
I heard the fairy pipers blow
Tunes, musical and sweet.

I tried to stay awake all night
To see them by the morning light,
But when I looked at break of day
The rain had washed them all away.

Johnny

THE moon looked over the hill-top,
It shone through the open door ;
—A myriad glancing fairies dancing over the earthen
floor,—

And Johnny was there a-sleeping
Just in the path of the moon !

Oh ! mother ! come quickly, quickly, quickly ;
Mother, come in from the kitchen quickly
Or Johnny will want the moon !

Soft as silk is the fairies' song,
Set to a dancing tune.

—The babe who dreams in the moony beams is
carried away to the moon.—
What have we here to give him
So bright as the fairy way ?
Mother, come quickly, quickly, quickly ;
Mother, come in from the kitchen quickly
Or Johnny will slip away.

The moon crept over the doorstep,
Johnny was lying there !

—There were fairies peeping at Johnny sleeping,
touching his hands and hair.—

Quick ! for the moon is calling !

If Johnny should wake and cry,
Come mother ever so quickly, quickly,
Call she ever so clearly, keenly—
Johnny would have to fly.

Mother came from the kitchen,
Stopped—for she could not hear
The calling moon and the fairies' tune sounding so
sweet and clear—

Johnny began to waken—

The fairies were round the door
Waiting to carry him quickly, quickly—
But mother ran to the cradle quickly,
Mother was there before !

Good Night

THE angels of the evening spread
Their shadowy wings across the sun,
The birds and beasts are all abed,
The day is done.

Now through the window on the stairs
I see the lamps of Heaven peep,
That light the angels at their prayers
When we're asleep.

I hold my lamp before the glass,
That strangers, travelling in the dark,
May see it glimmer as they pass,
A friendly spark.

Perhaps the angels in the skies
Can also see my signal light,
And whisper when I shut my eyes,
“Good night, good night.”

Studies and Experiments

The Wanderer

AT the turn of the year
When the summer is over,
There's a call in my ear
At the turn of the year,
So good-bye to you, dear,
I was ever a rover
At the turn of the year
When the summer is over.

The salt winds are blowing
Their bugles for me,
The sea tides are flowing,
The salt winds are blowing,
And I must be going
Where over the sea
The salt winds are blowing
Their bugles for me.

A Sestina of All Souls' Day

On All Souls' Day the spirits of the drowned can be raised to
Heaven by prayer.

GREY sea, grey shore, grey drifting sweeps of
rain,
A gaunt grey tree outlined against the sky
With spectral arms outstretched as if in prayer.
An earth-stained river creeping past the bar,
Strewing the surface of the sullen sea
With sodden leaves and streaks of muddy red.

The clouds reveal an inner gleam of red :
A ray of sun, half hidden by the rain,
Catches the surface of the moving sea
And weaves a ladder upward to the sky,
By which long-prisoned spirits, bar by bar,
Can Heavenward climb, armed with the keys of
prayer.

A Sestina of All Souls' Day 53

A little stone-built, storm-swept house of prayer,
Backed by a strip of beech-trees turning red,
Sends through its open doors a broken bar
Of singing, and, like spectres in the rain,
Outlined against the background of the sky,
The fisher folk troop churchward from the sea.

There is a hush of waiting on the sea,
A silence like a soft unspoken prayer.
The immense and brooding spaces of the sky
Are filled with feathery pinions, pink and red,
Cast by the sun that, vanquishing the rain,
Is dipping near the low horizon bar.

The little waves creep in across the bar,
Breaking the silence of the waiting sea.
Their thin white crests are fretted by the rain,
Their murmuring mingles with the distant prayer
That falls and rises evenly, where red
As fire the beech trees burn against the sky.

And now those souls put out upon the sky
That waited long at Heaven's eternal bar.

54 A Sestina of All Souls' Day

The candles in the churchyard glimmer red
As, sweeping in across the leaden sea,
Each spirit comes to claim a kinsman's prayer,
To seek a brother's pity in the rain.

Beyond the sky, across the silent sea,
Heaven's gates unbar before a faithful prayer,
The West is red ; the skies are free from rain.

There is no cry

HERE is no cry in the voice of the wind
And the song of the wind has no more sound
of sorrow,
For you are home, and you and I together
Can never heed the sadness of the wind.

Even the rain that beats upon our windows,
Even the rain sounds to my ears like music,
For you are home again, and all the storms
Can never make me heart-sick any more.

Here where the river spreads

HERE where the river spreads out to the rush
cover,
Tall reeds like sentinels lining the river-bank,—
Here where the sea-birds come plaintively wailing,
Here was our trysting-place, here she would meet
me.

“Leave me and go,” she would say to my pleading,
“Always the spirits are hovering over me,
Watching me, keeping me; am I not bound to
them,
Bound to this land of the wind and the curlew?”

Oh, I was strong and I laughed at her fancies,
Kissing her cheeks where the sea-wind had kissed
them,
Holding her hands till she said that she loved me,
Cold clinging hands like the touch of the river.

.

Here where the rushes grow close to the river-side
Came I upon her, my fair one, my beautiful,
Here had they caught her, lean hands from the
river,
Hands from the rushes had seized her and clung to
her.

Ah ! she was theirs and they hold her for ever.
The locks of her hair are the river-bed grasses,
Her hands in the wind that blows chilling against
me,
Her voice in the voice of the curlew above me.

A Fool's Dedication

DEAREST, to you, only to you
Sing I my songs, knowing your trust
Will through the false come to the true,
Will from the gold scatter the dust.

Others may scoff, laughing aloud,
Mocking my hope, teasing my dread,—
As at a fair gibbers the crowd
Ringed round the clown fooling for bread.

Roughly they laugh, dearest, and jeer ;
Heedless I play, mouthing my part,
Knowing each quip, sally and leer
Whispers its truth into your heart.

And on my page set I your name,
—Hid from their eyes, plain to your view—
This be my sole challenge to fame,
Dear, that I sang only to you.

Looking Forward

(A Child Song)

“WHEN we are old.”

Our dreams to-day

Are full of all we have in view,

With life before us, fresh and new,

So much to see, so much to say,

So many worlds wherein to play.

And all the things we mean to do,

When we are old.

If clouds should come across the blue,

And cast a shadow on our way,

We need not falter nor delay,

Our dreams will surely all come true,

When we are old.

“When we were young.”

When I and you

Have done our work, and, old and grey,

Await the closing of the day,

Because of all we tried to do,
And for the sake of dreams come true,
May we look back with smiles, and say,
“When we were young.”

And looking backward, grant we may
See deeds accomplished, one or two,
And battles won, however few,
To show that we had passed that way
When we were young.

THE END





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